Build Background

This poem is set during the Civil War. In 1862, after defeating Union forces at the Second Battle of Bull Run, Confederate troops moved north into Maryland. Led by generals Robert E. Lee and "Stonewall" Jackson, the troops marched into the town of Frederick. Lee and his men were expecting a warm welcome, but the people of Frederick were loyal to the Union. Whittier based "Barbara Frietchie" on these events.

Barbara Frietchie

by **John Greenleaf Whittier**

Up from the meadows rich with corn,
Clear in the cool September morn,

The clustered spires of Frederick stand
Green-walled by the hills of Maryland. Ⓐ

Round about them orchards sweep,
Apple and peach tree fruited deep,

Fair as the garden of the Lord
To the eyes of the famished rebel horde,°

On that pleasant morn of the early fall
When Lee marched over the mountain wall;

Over the mountains winding down,
Horse and foot, into Frederick town. Ⓑ

Forty flags with their silver stars,
Forty flags with their crimson bars,

8. **horde:** crowd.

Ⓐ **Literary Focus** **Rhythm** The first two lines have a regular meter, which is varied in the next two. What might the poet's intent be in varying the beat of the lines?

Ⓑ **Read and Discuss** What have we learned about the time and place of the story?

Differentiating Instruction

English-Language Learners

Before students read the poem, summarize the initial events for them as follows: On a September morning, a Confederate army approaches the town of Frederick, Maryland. The town supports the Union, which the Confederate troops have been fighting. The Confederate soldiers take down the Union flags they find, but one resident—an elderly woman named Barbara Frietchie—proudly waves a Union flag from her window.

Have students read the poem to find out how the Confederate soldiers react to the situation.

Readers Gaining Proficiency

Present students with the following possible paraphrases of lines 5–8 of "Barbara Frietchie":

1. The hungry rebel army gazes at the surrounding apple and peach orchards with appreciation.
2. The famished rebel horde looks round at the apple and peach trees fruited deep.

Ask students which is a correct paraphrase and why. [*The first is correct; it retains the original meaning of the lines but uses different wording. The second uses too much of the original wording to be considered a paraphrase.*]

Think About/Talk About

Comprehension

"Paul Revere's Ride"

Ⓘ Read and Discuss

Possible response: *Paul Revere's ride symbolizes the independent spirit of Americans.*

"Barbara Frietchie"

Ⓑ Read and Discuss

Possible response: *The story takes place in Frederick, Maryland, during the Civil War.*

Analysis

"Paul Revere's Ride"

Ⓗ Literary Focus

Possible response: *Paul Revere plans to warn villagers that the British are going to attack them. His friend signals that the British are coming by sea. Revere rides through all the villages, awakening and warning the people. Because of his warnings, the villagers are able to force the British back the next day.*

"Barbara Frietchie"

Ⓐ Literary Focus

Possible response: *A poet might want to vary the beat within a poem to keep readers' attention and prevent them from being lulled by a steady, singsong beat.*

Guided Practice

Model and Apply

- Tell students that many poets structure their poems to follow a set rhyming pattern known as a **rhyme scheme**.
- Remind students that they can identify a poem's rhyme scheme by looking at the pattern of end rhyme in each stanza.
- Model identifying the rhyme scheme in "Barbara Frietchie." Have a student volunteer read aloud lines 19–24.
- Point out the following end rhymes: *then* and *ten* (lines 19 and 20), *town* and *down* (lines 21 and 22), and *set* and *yet* (lines 23 and 24). Guide students in labeling the rhyme scheme (*aa, bb, cc*).
- Tell students that these lines contain exact rhyme. Explain that Whittier also uses slant rhyme, or words with slightly different sounds. For example, slant rhyme is found in the words *eye* and *light*. Ask students to list examples of exact rhyme for *eye* and *light*. ***Possible responses:*** bye, shy; fright, might
- Challenge students to find an example of slant rhyme on this page. ***Possible response:*** *Slant rhyme is found in* staff *and* scarf *(lines 31 and 32)*.

Flapped in the morning wind: the sun
Of noon looked down, and saw not one.

Up rose old Barbara Frietchie then,
Bowed with her fourscore years and ten;

Bravest of all in Frederick town,
She took up the flag the men hauled down

In her attic window the staff° she set,
To show that one heart was loyal yet.

Up the street came the rebel tread,°
Stonewall Jackson riding ahead.

Under his slouched hat left and right
He glanced; the old flag met his sight.

"Halt!"—the dust-brown ranks stood fast.
"Fire!"—out blazed the rifle blast.

It shivered the window, pane and sash;
It rent° the banner with seam and gash.

Quick, as it fell, from the broken staff
Dame Barbara snatched the silken scarf.

She leaned far out on the windowsill,
And shook it forth with a royal will.

"Shoot, if you must, this old gray head,
But spare your country's flag," she said. C

A shade of sadness, a blush of shame,
Over the face of the leader came;

21. staff: pole; stick.

23. tread: footstep.

30. rent (past tense of *rend*, meaning "tear"): tore; ripped.

C **Read and Discuss** What has happened?

Collaborative Learning

1. To help students identify with the poem's subject matter, tell them that over time, the United States has had several different flags.
2. Organize students into small groups. Assign one of the following historical U.S. flags to each group: the flag made by Betsy Ross, an early colonial flag such as the rattlesnake flag, the flag that inspired "The Star-Spangled Banner," the flag as it appeared at the time of Barbara Frietchie, the Confederate flag, and the flag raised at Iwo Jima during World War II.
3. Have members of each group research and write a short report about the history of their assigned flag. Reports should include the meanings of the symbols on the flag.
4. Have each group make a large, colored drawing of its assigned flag. When groups are finished, have them share their reports and flags with the class.

The nobler nature within him stirred
To life at that woman's deed and word;

"Who touches a hair of yon gray head
Dies like a dog! March on!" he said. Ⓓ

All day long through Frederick street
Sounded the tread of marching feet:

All day long that free flag tossed
Over the heads of the rebel host.

Ever its torn folds rose and fell
On the loyal winds that loved it well;

And through the hill gaps sunset light
Shone over it with a warm good night.

Barbara Frietchie's work is o'er,
And the Rebel rides on his raids no more.

Honor to her! and let a tear
Fall, for her sake, on Stonewall's bier.°

Over Barbara Frietchie's grave,
Flag of Freedom and Union, wave!

Peace and order and beauty draw
Round thy symbol of light and law;

And ever the stars above look down
On thy stars below in Frederick town! Ⓔ

Ⓓ **Reading Focus** **Paraphrasing** What happens in lines 37–42? Paraphrase that passage.

Ⓔ **Read and Discuss** Now what do we know?

Vocabulary **stirred** (sturd) *v.*: moved; roused.
host (hohst) *n.*: army; large number.



Barbara Frietchie (detail) (1876)
by Dennis Malone Carter (1827–1881).
Oil on canvas (36 ¼" x 46 ¼").
Kirby Collection of Historical Paintings, Lafayette College, Easton Pennsylvania.
Photo by Thomas Kosa.

54. bier (bihr): coffin and the platform on which it rests. Stonewall Jackson died in 1863 after being wounded in battle.

Think About/Talk About

Comprehension

Ⓒ Read and Discuss

Possible response: *The rebels hauled down all forty Union flags. Frietchie snatched one up and hung it in her window. Stonewall Jackson had it shot. It tore, but Frietchie took it up and is now daring Jackson to shoot her.*

Ⓓ Reading Focus

Possible response: *Frietchie's words move Stonewall Jackson's better nature, and he orders his soldiers not to shoot her. Possible paraphrase: Embarrassed, Jackson is moved by Frietchie's bravery. He threatens death to any of his men who harm her.*

Ⓔ Read and Discuss

Possible response: *We know that Frietchie was the winner in the confrontation, and the flag flew all day. We also know that the poet refers to the flag as a symbol of freedom and union and that it still flies in Frederick.*

? Extend the Discussion

Making Judgments Why do you think Jackson allowed Frietchie to fly her flag? Do you agree with his decision? Why or why not? ***Possible response:*** *Jackson allowed Frietchie to fly her flag because he respected her courage. Yes; I agree with his decision because Frietchie did not pose a threat to the troops, so they did not need to harm her.*

Reaching Reluctant Readers

Help students appreciate the actions of Barbara Frietchie by having them discuss the following questions in small groups:

1. What might have happened to Barbara Frietchie if Stonewall Jackson had not ordered his soldiers to leave her alone?
2. What do you think moved Barbara Frietchie to fly the Union flag from her window? What statement might she have been trying to make?
3. How do you think other people in Frederick felt to see Barbara Frietchie flying the Union flag?

Have students use their answers to write an evaluation of Barbara Frietchie's actions. Do students think she was courageous or foolish? Why? Ask groups to share their thoughts in a class discussion.

Review

Independent Practice

Reading Focus

Answers:

1. *They show how one person can change the course of history.*
2. *"Paul Revere's Ride": In times of danger, Americans will summon courage as did Paul Revere. "Barbara Frietchie": Barbara Frietchie is gone, but the flag endures as a symbol of peace and freedom.*

Vocabulary Check

3. *aghast; host; impetuous; stirred*

Literary Focus

Possible Responses:

4. *America's future depended upon Revere's success.*
5. *Americans will be inspired by Revere and emulate his courage.*
6. *Students should provide reasons for bravery or folly.*
7. *Paul Revere rode through the villages of Middlesex County in 1775 to warn that the British were coming. The poem's rhythm is fast-paced, as was Revere's ride.*
8. *Frietchie is strong-willed, stubborn, and patriotic.*
9. *The rhyme scheme of "Paul Revere's Ride" varies, but is usually* aabba. *The rhyme scheme of "Barbara Frietchie" is rhymed couplets—*aa, bb, *and so on. The poets may have used these because they were popular and easy to remember.*

SKILLS FOCUS p. 714

Literary Skills
- Analyze a narrative poem.
- Analyze rhythm and meter.
- Understand and analyze rhyme.

Reading Skills
- Paraphrase a poem.

Vocabulary Skills
- Demonstrate knowledge of literal meanings of words and their usage.

Writing Skills
- Incorporate rhyme in a narrative.

Applying Your Skills

Paul Revere's Ride / Barbara Frietchie

Respond and Think Critically

Reading Focus

Read with a Purpose

1. Why is it important that people remember what Paul Revere and Barbara Frietchie did?

Reading Skills: Paraphrasing

2. If you haven't done so already, paraphrase the final lines of "Paul Revere's Ride" and "Barbara Frietchie" to learn each poem's message.

	My Paraphrase
Paul Revere's Ride lines 125–130	
Barbara Frietchie lines 55–60	

Vocabulary Check

Fill in the blanks with the correct Vocabulary words.

impetuous aghast stirred host

3. The townspeople were _____ that a British _____ was coming. Revere, always _____, was ready to act. His bravery was _____ by the desire to protect his people.

Literary Focus

Literary Analysis

4. **Interpret** What is your interpretation of Longfellow's words "The fate of a nation was riding that night"?
5. **Infer** Why does Longfellow believe that Americans will remember Revere's ride "In the hour of darkness and peril and need"?
6. **Make Judgments** Discuss the bravery or folly of Barbara Frietchie's response, "Shoot, if you must, this old gray head, /but spare your country's flag."

Literary Skills: Narrative Poetry: Rhythm and Meter

7. **Analyze** Summarize the events of "Paul Revere's Ride." How does the poem's strong rhythm enhance the story it tells?
8. **Analyze** Narrative poems contain characters. What do Frietchie's actions reveal about her?

Literary Skills Review: Rhyme

9. **Analyze** A **rhyme scheme** is the pattern of rhymes in a poem. What are the rhyme schemes of "Paul Revere's Ride" and "Barbara Frietchie"? For what purpose might the poets have chosen to use regular rhyming patterns?

Writing Focus

Think as a Reader/Writer

Use It in Your Writing Create an outline for a short narrative poem about an event that took place at your school. Next to narrative details, list word pairs you would use as end rhymes.

What Do You Think Now? How did the poems clarify your ideas about when it might be important to express your beliefs?

Writing Focus

Alternative Prompt for Writers Gaining Proficiency Students may work in pairs to create the outline and list word pairs for end rhymes.

What Do You Think Now?

Ask students to summarize the beliefs that Longfellow and Whittier express in the two poems. Then, lead a class discussion about why each poet found it important to share these beliefs with readers.